

VZCZCXRO8718  
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHUJA #0608/01 0881102  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 291102Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9024  
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 6459  
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0195  
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0193  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000608

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

TREASURY FOR DPETERS  
DEPARTMENT PASS TO USTR (AGAMA)  
USDOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS  
USDOC FOR 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: FALLING BEHIND MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ABUJA 00000608 001.2 OF 002

¶1. Summary. Nigeria is not on track to meet its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) due to a lack of policy coordination between the federal, state and local governments. A major impediment is the lack of staff available to implement and monitor MDG projects. The Government of Nigeria (GON) has, incorporated the gains from the Paris Club debt relief into the annual budgets for 2006 and 2007, which has provided resources for key public sector reforms and focused public debate on the MDGs as instruments of Nigeria's development strategy. End Summary.

.  
MDGS ON TRACK  
-----

¶2. Nigeria likely would meet its Millennium Development Goals on primary education; ensuring a sustainable environment; developing global partnership for development; and girl-child education, but is not on track to meet other MDGs, according to Amina Ibrahim, Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme that was introduced in September 1999 had led to improved efficiency of primary education, with higher completion rates, and increased enrollment in primary school. The full realization of UBE however, still faced challenges of universal access, equity, quality, funding, and management.

¶3. Regarding the goal on promoting gender equality and empowering women, women had become increasingly favored in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector was 46% in 1996, increased to 62% in 1997, and rose to 79.4% in 2003, according to the General Household Surveys of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Though female political participation was an area needing special attention, the situation has improved at the federal level in terms of the appointment of women to political and decision making positions, according to Ibrahim. The increase in the number of women in cabinet and presidential advisory positions included the ministries of Finance, Health, and Education, Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, Director General of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency, CEO of the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, to mention just a few.

.  
MDGS Off Track  
-----

¶4. Ibrahim lamented that goals on health and poverty would not be met because implementation required enormous coordination among the

three tiers of government and a buy-in from sub-national governments, which is difficult due to Nigeria's federal system. Ibrahim explained that current efforts must be intensified if Nigeria is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. President Obasanjo has complained that criticism of the GON is unfair because he cannot order the states to fund certain sectors, unlike during military era of decrees when state governors were forced to comply. This has become an issue, such as when the MDG goal of primary education is undercut by the states because they fail to adequately support universal basic education, yet the GON receives the blame for missed targets. The federal government can and has taken some steps however, such as paying teachers' salaries directly and deducting the amounts from state allocations.

15. The ongoing dialogue between the three tiers of government and the benchmarking exercise by the National Planning Commission (NPC) which assessed the performance of states in economic reforms and execution of poverty reduction projects were steps in the right direction, according to Ibrahim. States that performed well in the NPC benchmarking exercise had been selected as pilot states that would benefit from donor aid and GON funding of some selected pro-poor projects. Some of the state governors and the chairperson of the governor's forum had been selected as members of the Presidential Committee on the Assessment and Monitoring of the MDGs. The state governors include those of Gombe, Enugu, Kebbi, Kwara, and Ondo.

How Debt Relief = MDG Spending  
-----

16. The Debt-Relief Gains (DRG) accruing from the Paris Club debt deal make 100 billion naira available yearly, which would have otherwise been spent on debt service. These funds go into a Virtual Poverty Fund to execute MDG related expenditure in key ministries, departments and agencies (MDA). The key MDAs are Health, Education, Water, Power, Gender, Youth, Environment, Housing, Agriculture, and

ABUJA 00000608 002.2 OF 002

Roads. The MDAs receive funding additional to their main budget envelopes for specific MDG spending.

17. The DRG funds were incorporated into the federal budgets of 2006 and 2007, and the MDG-related expenditures were executed through the key MDAs, while monitoring and evaluation was done by the private sector and civil society to avoid potential conflicts when a government agency is expected to render progress reports to another government agency, according to Ibrahim. At its inception it was difficult to get civil service cooperation in key MDAs because the MDGs were an unfamiliar concept and time consuming cultural re-orientation was necessary. Ongoing public service reform is addressing such problems but challenges remained.

.  
Challenges  
-----

.  
18. Ibrahim highlighted key challenges to Nigeria's faced in attaining the MDGs - lack of coherent policy, planning and budgeting; human resource capacity constraints in the MDAs; constraints in assessing funds to execute projects due to the "due process" mechanism; improper coordination among the ministries and their parastatals in project implementation; continued lack of consultation between MDAs and states resulting in the duplication of projects; inadequate provision of relevant baseline data; and inadequate investments by states in the MDGs. More than two decades of economic decay made it impossible to implement quick fixes. Achieving the MDGs would be a long-term process as a new generation took charge.

.  
MDGS Help Economic Reforms  
-----

.  
19. Ibrahim said that while the achieving the MDGs is important, simply getting them integrated into policy reforms and the budgets was an achievement in itself. The MDG's were now part of the public debate on Nigeria's development strategy with a positive impact on

public attitudes.

•  
Comment

-----

•  
¶10. Nigeria achieving the MDGs is a tough task that requires sustained action, high-level political will, and a systematic approach. While the GON should be credited for making progress on some MDGs, the new government that takes office in May, will need to continue the process, win over the hearts and minds of the public, and remake the civil service. The GON must see the MDGs as the baseline and not the ceiling for Nigeria's economic development.

CAMPBELL